

REMARKS

Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 36-49 and 62-79 are pending. Claims 50-61 have been canceled, without prejudice, and the details of the same added to the remaining claims. Claims 42 and 43 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 79-110 have been added. Claims 36-41, 44-49 and 62-110 are under active consideration. New claim 79 is similar to unamended claim 64. Additional claims 80-110 have been added to recite proper multiple dependencies with the amendment of claim 38 to be multiply dependent. No new matter has been added.

Claims 36-38 have been amended to include the details of claims 50-61. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, on page 14, lines 23-24 of the specification.

Claims 44-49 have been amended to include a further description of the recited epitope. Basis for the amendment may be found, for example, at page 8, lines 4-6 of the specification. No new matter has been added.

The Section 112, first paragraph, rejection of claims 44-49 is traversed. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are requested in view of the following.

The claims have been amended to further indicate that the recited epitopes consist of at least 5 or 6 amino acids, as indicated by the Examiner on page 5 of the Office Action dated December 15, 2003.

The specification describes in Figure 1, for example, the amino acid sequence of several HCV NS3 clones. Moreover, page 17, lines 6-10, for example, of the specification, defines isolate-specific amino acids. The applicants believe that one of

ordinary skill will appreciate that this description, and the whole of the disclosure, adequately describes the presently claimed invention. The claimed invention has been exemplified with a specific isolate. One of ordinary skill in the present art would not require such exemplification of each epitope of the claims to establish that the applicants were "in possession" of the claimed invention at the time the application was filed. One of ordinary skill would believe that one or perhaps two exemplifications would be sufficient to support the claimed invention. The Examiner is urged to appreciate that the epitopes of the claims require more than a single amino acid.

Withdrawal of the Section 112, first paragraph, rejection of claims 44-49 is requested.

The Section 103 rejection of claims 36-38, 40, 41 and 50-76 over Seidel (US 6,036,579) and "Antibodies: A Laboratory Manual" by Harlow and Lane, the Section 103 rejection of claims 39 and 44-49 over Seidel, Harlow and Leroux-Roels (WO 95/12677), and the Section 103 rejection of claims 78 and 79 over Seidel, Harlow and Icardi et al (Clinical Microbiology, Sept 1997, pages 2331-2336 (Vol. 35, No. 9)), are traversed.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 103 rejections are requested as none of the cited art, alone or in combination, teach or suggest the use of a method of sulphonation and desulphonation to prepare products of the presently claimed invention, which the applicants believe provides an improved biological activity and/or conformation closer to the native protein in reactivity than products produced by methods of the cited art. While the Examiner rejected claims 50-61 as allegedly being obvious over the cited combination of art, the Examiner has not indicated specifically

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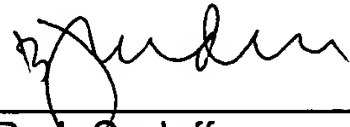
where the art teaches or suggests the use of a process of the presently claimed invention. Withdrawal of the Section 103 rejections is requested

The claims are submitted to be in condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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